

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis Legislation to Strengthen National Guard
Bipartisan Bill Puts Guard Chief on Joint Chiefs of Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) today introduced bipartisan legislation to strengthen the National Guard – including making the Chief of the National Guard bureau a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and improving the Guard’s ability to respond to emergencies, both at home and abroad.

“At no time in America’s history has the National Guard played so critical a role in the security of our homeland and in our nation’s military objectives abroad,” Davis said. “The Guard serves our governors in times of domestic emergency and is key component in fighting on front lines of the war on terrorism.”

“This legislation gives the Guard a seat at the table at the Pentagon in all important decisions, a role that is commensurate with the responsibilities we ask of it,” Davis added. “The men and women of the National Guard have earned the right to be represented at the highest levels of the Department of Defense.”

Davis was joined in introducing the bill by Rep. Gene Taylor (D-MS), a co-chairman of the House Guard and Reserve Components Caucus. Also signing on as original co-sponsors are Reps. Jim Gibbons (R-NV), Robin Hayes (R-N.C.), Candice Miller (R-MI), and Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) – all members of the House Armed Services Committee.

The bill has received the support of the National Guard Association, the Adjutant Generals Association, and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard.

The legislation, called “The National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act,” would:

- Elevate the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to a four-star position and making the Chief part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- Give the National Guard the budgetary power to acquire equipment essential to its mission so that the U.S. is better prepared to respond to emergencies.
- Require the Chief of the National Guard to identify gaps between federal and state capabilities to respond to emergencies, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense to address those gaps
- Mandate that the Pentagon’s budget proposal to specify separate amounts for training and equipment for the National Guard
- Require the Deputy Commander of U.S. Northern Command to be a member of the National Guard to ensure that planning at NORCOM better encompasses the interests of the National Guard and the states.

In addition to providing crucial contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the National Guard was a tremendous help during the response to Hurricane Katrina. Despite its valuable role home and abroad, the Guard faces severe equipment shortages and its perspective is not always taken in account at the Pentagon.

“A change like this always faces initial resistance,” Davis said. “But as Members come to realize how much we rely on the Guard, I believe they will see the reforms in this legislation as not only necessary but beneficial to the workings of the entire military. There’s no denying that the Guard has earned this enhanced stature.”

U.S. Sens. Kit Bond (R-MO) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT), co-chairs of the Senate National Guard Caucus, have introduced an identical bill in the Senate.

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